

## Trofeo Accademia Navale

25-28 April 2002

The USNA was invited by the Italian Naval Academy to attend the T.A.N. regatta in Livorno, Italy. The regatta is sponsored by both the town of Livorno and the Italian Naval Academy. The USNA sent five midshipmen: 1/C Ted Huebner, 1/C Jeff Smith, 1/C Mike Smith, 1/C Jason Chen, and 2/C Lindsay Bartel. LT Brad Busch was the officer representative. This is an account of the midshipmen's trip.

### Tuesday & Wednesday, 23-24 April:

Our trip to Livorno, Italy started by gathering at Robert Crown at 1300 for Coach Dellenbaugh to drive us to the Ronald Reagan Airport for our flight. Our flights over to Italy went really smoothly and without delay. Luckily, the flight from New York to Milan was practically empty – allowing everyone to stretch out across three seats each and sleep during the eight-hour flight.

The only slight mistake was at the Milan airport. After landing, we thought we needed to get our bags for customs. Unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding in our translation of Italian, we waited for over an hour at the baggage claim while our bags were loaded on to the plane for Pisa. Once we figured out our bags were checked all the way through to Pisa, the trip continued without incident.

One of our Italian hosts, ENS Roberto Ruggiero, met us at the Pisa, airport. After a short ride to Accademie Navale in Livorno, we settled into our rooms. We were living in a barracks style room with approximately 45 other people. Ironically, our beds were next to the Russians. Unfortunately, there was not time to go out for a practice sail, but we were able to prepare our boat, *Alphard*. We inspected and cleaned the hull. Ted inspected the rudder and found the lower rudder post on the stern

needed a new bushing, which the Italian “Cuttershed” was able to fix for us. We pulled out our sails and made some minor repairs to our blue and gold spinnaker – an amazing coincidence we got blue and gold! Jeff and Jason tuned the rig for approximately ten knots – the expected wind for the first day of racing. After we were finished preparing the boat, the Italians used their crane to splash our boat in San Leopold Harbor (the Italian “Santee Basin”).

Our first dinner was with the Italian cadets in their dining room. After dinner, our hosts took us down to the Livorno harbor to see the festival area of the T.A.N. regatta. We were lucky to be able to board the Accademia



Navale's training ship, *Capricia*, an 80 ft all-wooden ketch donated to the Italian Navy by the owner of the Fiat company. All the cadets spend a summer sailing on *Capricia* or her sister ship for "CSNTS" training. With all the teak and wood, our hosts remembered their cruises involved lots of polishing and scrubbing! We ended the night early to prepare for the first day of racing.

### **Thursday, 25 April:**

Thursday morning started at 0725. Lindsay was staying with the women cadets in a barracks room similar to the men, and she was awoken by the cadets running around and making their racks in perfect unison. Breakfast at the Academy consists of bread and butter, tea, and cheese – not exactly a Denny's Grand Slam! After jury-rigging a leech line and retuning the rig for less wind, we headed out of the harbor for our first day of racing.



The first race started at 1100 with 70 boats gathered in all out mayhem on the starting line. Unfortunately, the spectator boat – a brand new Coast Guard patrol craft – went to the IMS fleet vice the J24s, so LT Busch missed the start of the first race. We entered the start sequence and got off on the 3<sup>rd</sup> row in dirty air, so we tacked over to port. Noticing almost every other J24 with hugely scalloped jib luffs, we did the same and gained both a little more speed and a better point. The roundings were safe and civil during the first race. The other boats seemed to pinch upwind and sail dead down wind, but we tried to sail closer to the polars and had good boat speed compared to the fleet. We finished the first race in the top third, right ahead of the British team.



For the second race, we again started in bad air and had to tack out. As we went to the starboard side, the wind moved to the port side. The wind continued left until the RC decided to abandon the race after the boats on the port side were raising spinnakers on the upwind leg! Aggressive starts by the fleet caused general recalls on the next two starts. With the black flag rule in effect, about 20 boats or so were disqualified from the second race's start. The roundings for the second race were mass hysteria and mayhem. From the spectator boat, LT Busch thought the rounding looked more like NASCAR than sailing, with shouts and screams in many different languages. The second race ended with us right behind the British in the top third.

The RC decided to race a third race. We had our best start at the pin end. Throughout the upwind leg, we were able to keep up with the leaders of the race. At the windward mark, we were a little short and had to tack twice to make the mark. At the leeward mark, a six-plus boat collision ended up with one boat stuck to the mark. As we rounded and passed the boat, it freed itself and blocked us, allowing several boats to get inside of us. We continued to sail a good race and were the second or third boat from the naval academies to finish. We sailed back to the harbor and hurried off to the opening ceremonies. The opening ceremonies were in the Italian



“T-Court” and included speeches from the Mayor of Livorno and the Commandant of the Accademie Navale. There was a demonstration of an Italian commando force who parachuted into the courtyard and fast roped down into the courtyard from the top of the main building. The race results for the first day showed us in 23<sup>rd</sup> place overall and in 2<sup>nd</sup> place within the naval academies with 94 points. The French were having a great regatta and were in first place among the academies with only 41 points.

For dinner Thursday night, LT Busch and the crew split up. He went out to dinner with CDR Berrutti and his family, the American LTs on exchange, and the Naval attaché from Rome. They had a wonderful five-course dinner in a restaurant on the top of a hill overlooking Livorno. The hosts took us out to dinner in the town of Montecarlo. Dinner included five courses served by the owner of the restaurant and his wife. The wine for dinner was made on the owner’s farm. On the way back from dinner, we stopped in Pisa and

viewed the Tower – it’s still leaning. We made it back to the Accademie for some sleep before the races on Friday.

### **Friday, 26 April:**

The first race began in moderate breezes, and as was the custom with this regatta, there was a general recall at the start. After the first upwind mark, two boats collided and became entangled. The crews started a fistfight on the water! On the downwind mark, Ted made an outstanding rounding, and we were able to jump inside of about six boats. We finished the race near the top third of the fleet.

The second race involved two separate collisions for us. It started under a black flag. As we were luffing near the start line seconds before the start, we were hit from behind and pushed over the start line within 4 boat lengths of the RC boat. Worried about being BFD’d, Lindsay looked over to the judge who shrugged his shoulders and said “It’s ok...”. As we approached the windward mark on starboard, the British boat came at us on port. They didn’t head up and we weren’t able to avoid them before they T-boned us on the port beam. An



unusual event for the regatta occurred - the British admitted guilt and performed a 720! The second race finished without any more incidents. The course for the third race ended up being heavily skewed and almost half the fleet was over the line when the race started. We finished in near the upper in both the second and third races.



Friday afternoon, LT Busch went on a tour of the Accademia's new bridge simulator. As a SWO, LT Busch was thoroughly impressed with the "virtual YP". The room was set up exactly like a real bridge with large screens covering a field of view of 270 degrees. They have 6 bridges that can be linked together to allow a squadron of ships to practice tactical maneuvers. The computer allows for the ship characteristics of any Italian warship to be used and any kind of weather or sea state to be simulated. They ran a heavy sea state for a demonstration and everyone on the bridge grabbed something to hold onto as the ship "rolled". The simulator also allows the Italians to practice entering port at all their naval bases. The Accademia's simulator sure beat the old black-walled simulator at SWOS Division Officer school!

The regatta organized a dinner for the all the naval academies in the regatta area in downtown Livorno. The Japanese seized the opportunity to perform several rounds of karaoke for the crowd! After dinner, our hosts took us out to a "disco" in the nearby town of Viareggio to see some Italian culture.

### **Saturday, 27 April:**

When we awoke Saturday morning, the winds were blowing heavy and the seas were building. As we made it out to the racing area, the RC canceled the races for the day due to the heavy sea state.

After getting the final word that the afternoon race was canceled, we headed for some sightseeing in Florence. After hunting around Florence for an hour to find some parking, we finally parked and started walking in town. As soon as we started walking, a storm hit the town with marble-sized hailing pelting us. We were soaked as the heavy thunderstorm rolled through town, but we continued on our tourist trip nonetheless. We saw the Duomo and the Signore Cathedrals. We took many pictures standing in front of the statue of David. As another thunderstorm started to roll through, we headed into a pub for dinner. The pub was a popular hang out for the Italian cadets in their first and second years at the Accademia. After a great night of music, dancing, and fun, we started back to Livorno. Unfortunately, one of our hosts had forgotten where he parked his car - Ted and Jeff ended up looking for the car in the streets of Livorno for about an hour! To add to their misery, they got lost on the way back to the Accademia, so they didn't make it back until long after the rest of us were sound asleep!



LT Busch was not able to go to Florence with us because he had a reception with the Mayor of Livorno and the dinner party on the *Vespucci*, the Italian tall ship. After shaking hands with the Mayor and giving him a copy of ADM McNitt's book on Navy Sailing, he had dinner on the *Vespucci*. It was an excellent chance to walk on the deck of the tall ship and talk with many Italian naval officers who all had stories of their days as a cadet sailing on the *Vespucci*.

### **Sunday, April 28:**

Sunday morning started about an hour earlier than normal to ensure enough time for two races before the closing ceremonies. The wind was blowing around 15 knots when we started the first



race, but it died as the sea breeze came in very early. Once the sea breeze had set, we had finished the first race and waited as the RC reset the marks for the second and final race. We had a frustrating start to the second race, as we were stuck in bad air for the first beat. As the breeze picked up and we were able to find some clean air, we had a great final run in surfing conditions and made up a lot of spots in the fleet.

As the second race finished, the wind began to really build - making for a miserable beat back to the harbor. After we had put the boat away and turned in our sails, we went back to get ready for the closing ceremonies.

The closing ceremonies were for the entire regatta and included all the classes that sailed. We finished 33<sup>rd</sup> overall in a fleet of 71 boats and 5<sup>th</sup> among the 21 naval academies.

After the closing ceremonies, our hosts took us out to dinner in town. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> year host (equivalent to a 2/c) is from Livorno, so he took us all to a small Italian pizzeria. It was only "take-out" run by a family, unless you knew of the little room behind the kitchen. You literally had to walk through the kitchen, past the oven, to get to the small room in the back with 3 tables. The pizza was outstanding - it made Drydock pizza inedible from now on!



Following dinner, we decided to head back to Florence for another night in the city. LT Busch was able to come this time, so we showed him the Cathedrals and the statue of David. After spending the night in Florence, we headed back in time to pack and make our 0400 shuttle to the Pisa airport. Our flight back went smoothly - we all slept for almost all of the flights. Coach Dellenbaugh was at Ronald Regan Airport to give us a ride home from our trip.

We all had a wonderful time and learned a lot about sailing in a huge fleet. Our Italian hosts were extremely gracious, and we were able to talk to cadets and midshipmen from around the world.

